GUIDE TO THE RV2 YAKUT FILE

[The RV2 file is concerned with the Yakut people, including the Dolgan, of Siberia. These people lived in the area of the basin of the Middle Lena River and the Aldan and Vilyuy Rivers, a region of primarily taiga vegetation. They spoke a form of the Turkic language and there was very little dialectical variation throughout the area. Yakutia was contacted and annexed by Russia in the 17th century. It is now a part of the Soviet Union. The Yakut were pastoral people, herding horses and cattle. They were semi-nomadic and settlements were widely dispersed and quite small--the winter camps usually having less than twenty people. Aboriginally the Yakut were organized into patrilineal exogamous clans which were grouped at a higher level into aymakh or d'on. The Russians used this system to form administrative units. Although by the mid-nineteenth century, all of the Yakuts were registered as members of the Russian Orthodox church, shamanism was still practiced.

There are thirty-two sources in the Yakut file, six of which are translations. Of the thirty-two sources, only thirteen were written by ethnologists, and of these, only six have a rating of 4 or 5. Many of the sources consist of excerpts from very early (1785-1900) reports of explorers, missionaries, travelers, etc. These reports are generally brief and superficial and in some cases, unreliable. The basic orienting sources in the file are 2: Jochelson and 53: Tokarev and Gurvitch. 54: Popov and 55: Popov are on the Dolgan. 6: Sauer is an early primary source which covers a variety of subjects. 14: Krauss is a translation of Priklonskii's excellent and thorough study of shamanism, and 15: Popov is on the blacksmith and the relationship between blacksmiths and shamans. 18: Priklonskii is also on shamanism

and beliefs about sickness and death. 19: Kharuzin is a good survey of the clan system and customary law. 27: Coxwell is a study of Siberian folklore. 39: Jochelson is a study of the making of kumiss and the kumiss festival. The file is not recommended for general comparative purposes. The only subject covered in depth is shamanism. Many of the sources were processed prior to 1954 and are in the typed format and lack the standardized OWC codes. The file was processed between 1952 and 1969.]